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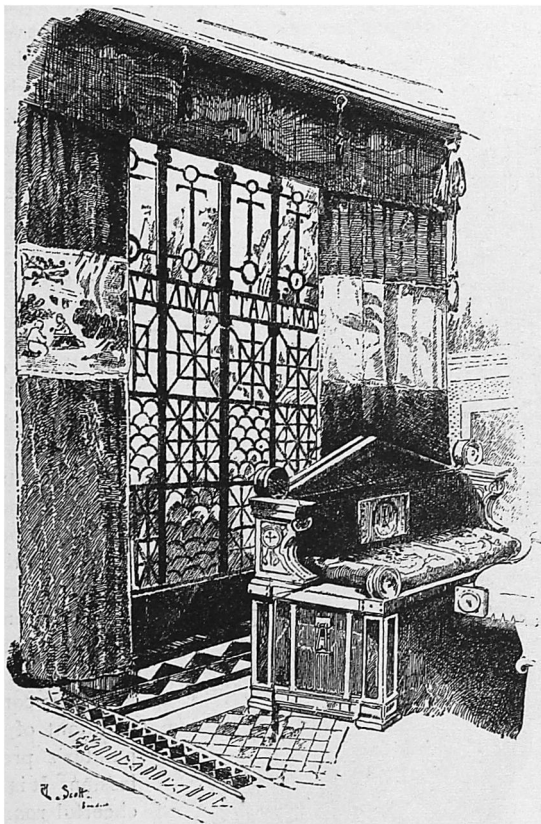
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DECORATION & FURNITURE

THE HOME OF ALMA-TADEMA.



A WINDOW IN ALMA-TADEMA'S HOUSE.

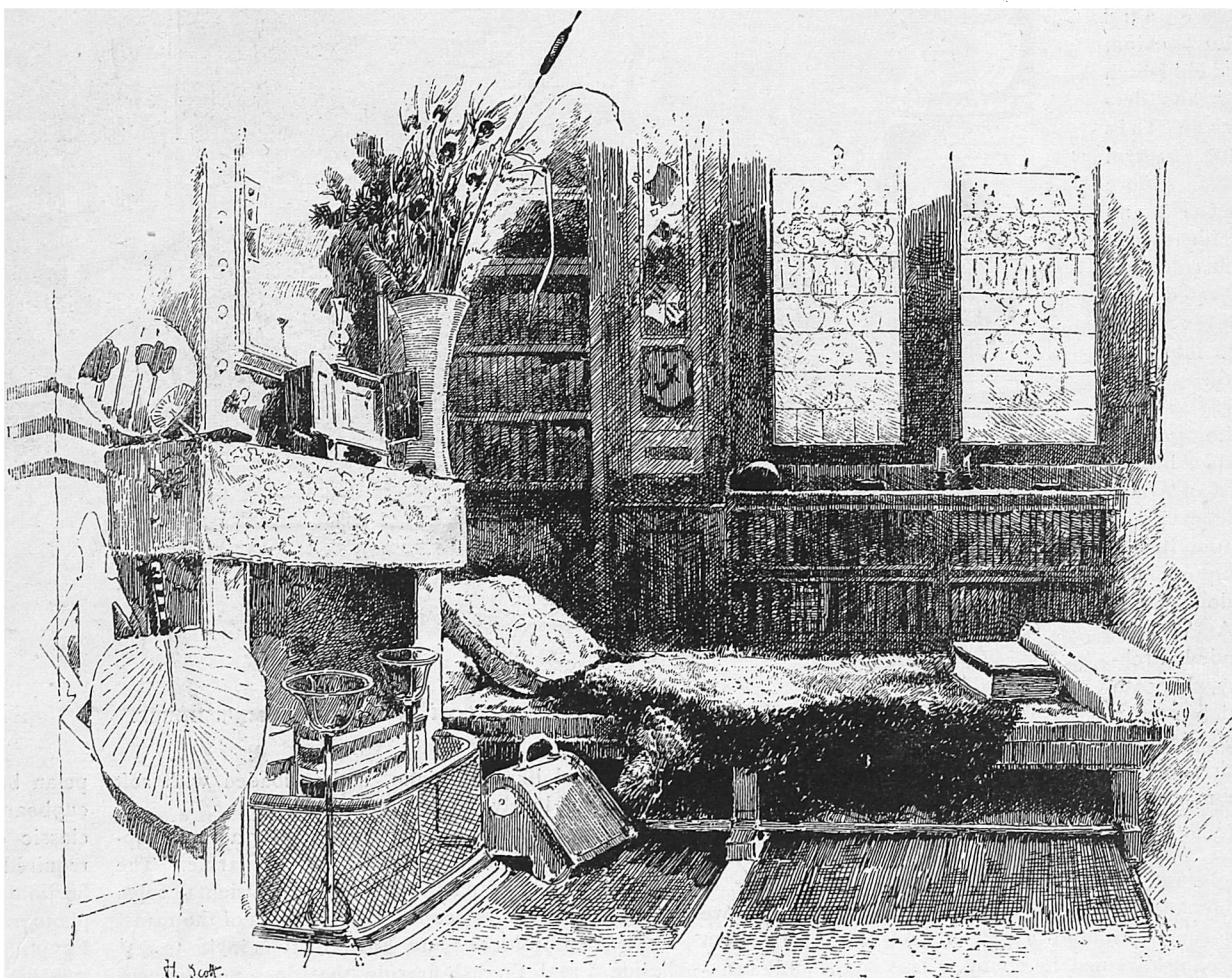
much strangers in their abodes as their visitors; they do not fit into them; it is too evident that a clever architect has designed the whole and that their presence is a mere accident and often a disturbing one. It is not so with Alma-Tadema. His house is an expression of himself, and lovely as it is, when he and his family are absent from it, it is as though the clew to the comprehension of the whole were lacking. There are no mere show rooms; this is a house that is lived in, worked in, and the warm feeling that results from this is everywhere present. Alma-Tadema's house is but another work of art from his own hand, planned and decorated after his own designs, and his boldly original taste, free from any taint of conventionality is everywhere evident. It cannot be classified into any recognized style, any more than his pictures; it is the outcome of the individuality of the man.

Townshend House is situated in St. John's Wood overlooking Regent's Park. It was not built for its present owner, and outside it is a mere ordinary-looking London house, standing in a dull row at the corner of a dreary metropolitan street. But when once we have pushed open the gate and crossed the small front garden it soon becomes evident that it is not the ordinary London house we are about to enter. Over the solid oaken door a friendly "Salve" greets our eyes and encourages us to seek the admission that the grim, antique brazen mask which constitutes the knocker almost seems to refuse. When the door closes behind us, we leave all memory of grimy London streets without; for once we are in fairyland, and impervious indeed to beauty must be the visitor who does not yield to the overwhelming number of lovely impressions that instantly crowd upon him. If it is a reception day at Townshend House he

We said in our former paper* that Alma-Tadema impresses his individuality upon all he says and does. It is not therefore astonishing that he impresses it also upon his home, Townshend House. Never was Diderot's maxim truer than "Le milieu explique l'homme, l'atelier commente l'œuvre." Old times and new, east, west, north, and south have all been pressed into the service of decorating this lovely house, but the master mind of the owner has bent them all to serve his purposes, and their individuality has become blended with his greater one, so that what in mere cataloguing sounds like a heterogeneous mass, presents to the eye a harmonious and amalgamated whole. The dwellers in beautiful houses too often convey a feeling to our minds that they are as

will find himself in a small vestibule ingeniously formed by the open doors of the two rooms that lead out from each side of the entrance. Turning to the left and raising a soft silken curtain of Eastern material and design the visitor enters Mrs. Alma-Tadema's reception-room, which is divided off by a curtain only from her studio. The walls of this reception-room are hung with pictures—works by the painter himself, gifts from friends, and portraits of Mrs. Alma-Tadema by Bastien Lepage, John Collier, and her husband, not one of which does justice to her beauty. The gem of the room is Alma-Tadema's own picture, "The Death of the First-born in Egypt," a masterpiece of restrained pathos. A light oak cottage piano with graceful designs and staves of antique notation from the brushes of the painter and his wife stands in this room, which is further decorated with Eastern rugs, quaint old carvings, and china. Fresh flowers, too, are rarely absent. Into the window-panes are let stained-glass portraits of Alma-Tadema's two daughters. The studio beyond is decorated in soft whites relieved with Spanish leather. A fine old Japanese press, quaint cupboards, and bric-a-brac are crowded into this small apartment, across which a Mexican hammock is often swung, inviting to dreamy contemplation of the beauty of the two rooms it commands. The whole is lighted by a window of soft stained glass, placed above a mirror bearing the genial inscription: "When friends meet, hearts warm." This portion of the wall is in reality a door, and during summer or in the evening it is usually opened, revealing a small conservatory that contains a fine oleander tree, ferns, and other plants, and at whose base stands a white marble tank that receives its water from the mouth of a tragic mask. On summer evenings this is hung with Chinese lanterns, and so is the garden that opens hence, and which at certain seasons of the year is one blaze of poppies, flowers dear to the artist who has painted them so well in his "Tarquinius Superbus."

If instead of turning to the left we had turned to the right on entering the house, we should have found ourselves in the library, a quaint room, divided off by a slip. As befits a library, the general tone is subdued, and the walls are almost entirely lined with books. A painted window of delicate old Dutch glass lets a subdued light into this apartment, which communicates with the dining-room by means of a heavy dark door, that affords, when the table is spread for dinner, one of those vistas of varied light and color dear to the still-life painters of Holland. Indeed Alma-Tadema's house presents that which is rarely absent from his pictures, glimpses into distant rooms or openings, affording in the case of his house a feeling of air and size, so that it is with difficulty that we realize



THE LIBRARY IN ALMA-TADEMA'S HOUSE.

that it is in truth a small one. Water-color flower paintings, carved oaken cabinets, and rich old-gold plush hangings adorn this room, in which we must not linger, for the glory of the house is above stairs, where is also the master's studio.

* See the article on Alma-Tadema, by H. Zimmern, in THE ART AMATEUR for April, 1883.

The walls of the lower hall and of the narrow winding staircase are hung with photographs from Alma-Tadema's pictures. On reception days the doors that shut off the entire first floor stand hospitably open, and a quaintly hung curtain of rich Chinese silk affords admission. We find ourselves in an almost bewildering scene of loveliness, vistas of rooms seen through curtains opening on all sides. Surely by some error we have stepped into Hans Christian Andersen's "Lucky Galoshes." But are we in Persia? in Byzantium? in Pompeii? in Delft? or can we be in all together? Yes, we are in all together, but as the eye grows used to the scene we recognize that each is deftly kept apart though they thus seem to mingle. The first room, if so we may call it, since no door divides it from the next compartment, is sixteenth century Dutch and known as the panel-room, because it is lined up to its high and deeply vaulted ceiling with panels derived from old Dutch cabinets. A window of the same date, retaining its lattice glass, its oaken shutters, and steel clamps, admits the light. Brass dishes, blue and white china, and old Dutch portraits decorate this snug warm room. More details and accidents of rich color are repeated in a convex mirror let into the wall. Over this, as presiding genius, rests a bronze bust of Alma-Tadema made by the Italian sculptor Amendola.

A double-headed archway, beneath which runs a shelf laden with rare glass and china, divides this room from the most splendid in Townshend House, that known as the gold-room, because ceiling and walls have been overlaid with unvarnished gold leaf. At a height of about five feet from the inlaid floor of ebony and maple rises a Byzantine dado, and above this runs a miniature plaster cast of the Parthenon frieze, also framed in ebony. This is the only ornament upon the walls; no picture, save one of the mistress of the house, breaks their beautiful surface so full of ever-varying accidents of color, transmitted through a window whose panes consist of translucent Mexican onyx. The leading repeats, what is repeated

throughout Townshend House, in likely and unlikely places, the initials of the master and mistress, which happen to be identical. In this room stands the far-famed grand piano, to beautify which ivory, tortoiseshell, brass, and precious woods all bear their part, refuting loudly the current notion that a piano is from its shape of necessity an ugly object. The inside of the cover is lined with vellum, and on this are inscribed the names of all those famous artists—and their name is many—who have played the instrument, which is as excellent as it is beautiful. The player's seat is designed after the fashion of a Byzantine chair;

dows are also of onyx, but of a warmer tint than in the gold-room. Rich cloisonné work, bowls of marble and jade, ornaments of bronze, objets de luxe of every description, contributed by countries the most various, crowd this room, to which choice flowers grouped with exquisite artistic feeling impart a finishing touch of beauty. Hence again we pass into a tiny room, a mere slip after the manner of Pompeii, and decorated in the style of that dead city by the artist's own hand. From here once more, mounting three polished brass steps, we enter the sanctuary of Townshend House, the studio of its master and maker. It is a square

room, not very large, and is remarkable among studios in that it does not possess that "bogy" of the painter's work-room, a lay-figure. Neither is there any of the litter or smell of paint that we habitually associate with a studio. Alma-Tadema does not hold the doctrine, dear to so many artists, that untidiness is a necessary concomitant of a painter's profession. It is a cheerful room as well as a beautiful one, and essentially pervaded with that subtle feeling of being lived and worked in that makes those susceptible to such influences feel instantly at home and at ease. Round the large bay-window, whose lower half is surrounded by looking-glasses, inclosed by pillars that can be removed at will, so as to make the window larger when needful, runs a low cushioned seat. From here we can best survey the room with its Pom-



THE DRAWING-ROOM IN ALMA-TADEMA'S HOUSE.

it is inlaid like the piano, and is loaded with soft cushions of lovely hues.

Passing from this gold-room we enter a room supported by two Ionic columns of yellow marble. The floor is inlaid and partly covered with Oriental rugs. Couches and chairs heaped with cushions of the rarest Eastern embroideries and Eastern stuffs invite to rest beside a real English fireside, that does not disturb, but rather enhances the charm of the apartment. The ceiling is painted yellow, with a delicate Persian design outlined in darker colors; the walls are hung with antique Persian appliqué work that once adorned a Venetian palace. The upper portions of the win-

peian browns and yellows, its cunning shelves and cupboards where lie rolled up in classic fashion the classic draperies, stuffs, and artistic "properties" required by the artist. Here too lie piled on narrow horizontal shelves portfolios and books full of choice photographs and engravings of ancient buildings in Egypt, Greece, and Rome, copies of bas-reliefs, statues, inscriptions, and other works of art needed for this learned artist's pictures. In accordance with the Pompeian character of the room, the ceiling is frescoed. The original suggestion was taken from a ceiling in the Baths of Titus at Rome, but the chief figures introduced, such as the central one of Apollo

guiding the horses of the sun, are the painter's own design. Across the window embrasure runs an inscription, that gives the keynote to all Alma-Tadema's life: "As the sun colors flowers, so art colors life." Neither are the walls mere slavish imitations of ancient models. As in his pictures, so here, Alma-Tadema allows his fancy free play. Whoever looks at them closely will find that though on a careless glance he will carry away the impression that all the panels are painted with classical designs, closer inspection will reveal that this is by no means the case. Many of them are genial *jeux d'esprit*, for Alma-Tadema is no "grave and reverent seignior," but a man who dearly loves a joke. Here then we see a panel on which are depicted the tools of plasterers, bricklayers, and carpenters, a trowel, a saw, and an old oil bottle. Another bears on it dirty old paint pots and brushes, the utensils of the house-painter's craft, and a wooden board stretches across with the caution "Wet Paint." Yet another shows a long bill, happily receipted with a real receipt stamp, and bags of money lying round.

A writing or designing desk, altar-shaped, and decorated with bas-reliefs after Greek, Byzantine, and modern masters, occupies one corner of the room. Low stools and quaint seats, exactly copied from Egyptian models, are dotted about the room. The artist himself prefers for painting a wicker stool that is usually covered with silken stuffs or skins. Tiger skins are thrown across low wicker arm-chairs or lie upon the parquetry floor into which is let a mosaic of colored woods, repeating the initials L. A. T. On a projecting shelf that runs all round the wall, stand fragments of sculpture, canvases begun and abandoned, and articles of vertu. The fireplace is flanked by pilasters, between which hangs a curtain of dark golden stuff, throwing out into rich relief the bronze bust of Mrs. Alma-Tadema, who fittingly presides above the hearthstone. There are usually two or three easels standing in the room, often bearing pictures on both back and front. Those upon which Alma-Tadema is not actually at work are sometimes veiled from sight by a rich piece of drapery. A curtain hung over one corner of the room hides those that are for a time totally withdrawn. Beside the fireplace, a doorway, habitually closed by a Japanese matting, forms a second exit from this studio, whence we descend again by three brass steps into the panel-

room, having thus made the tour of the whole floor. When the artist desires not to be disturbed, he can close himself in by drawing down a door on which he has painted a Bacchus sailing the seas, a copy from a design in the centre of a Greek dish. Indeed Townshend House is full of such unexpected doors and openings, due to the fecund and happy imaginings of its master. To see it properly one must have visited it often, have stayed in it, have seen it in all lights and times. It is not a house to be comprehended in one short visit, and it may be added that the oftener one sees it, and the more one comes to understand how all these lovely effects have been brought about, the

THE COLOR OF WALLS AND WOODWORK.

WALLS to a room (says a writer in *The Paper World*) should be regarded only in the light of a framework for what the room contains, and should be decorated so as to bring into prominence, and not eclipse, the other parts of the chamber. Nothing destroys the effect of a room so much as a handsome but staring wall-paper, or a wall so profusely ornamented as to strike upon the eye to the exclusion of the rest of the decorations, thus bringing forward what should be the background into the most conspicuous place. A modern drawing-room is always

difficult to decorate artistically, because of the taste of its builders for heavy cornices, prominent mantel-pieces, and rooms too lofty for their size; and as all these misnamed "embellishments" are too costly to be removed by tenants, the only plan to pursue is to destroy their effect by exercising both taste and ingenuity.

First, with regard to the ceiling, the ornamental plaster boss in its centre should be removed and the ceiling tinted a color that harmonizes with the wall-paper, as no harmonies can be hoped for when what produces them is surmounted with the glaring white of an ordinary ceiling. The tint used must be one that softens into the wall-paper, not one that contrasts; thus, if the tone of the room is a soft gray-blue, the ceiling should be a clear flesh-pink; or should a gray-green picked out with black be the chosen color, then it should be colored a subdued lemon.

Some people cover their ceilings with a whole colored paper and border it with a stencilled pattern representing the thin garlands so familiar upon Queen

Anne decorations; but this is a more troublesome plan than the simple coloring, which answers all the purpose. The walls, if they are lofty, require a high dado. These high dados give a look of comfort and "home" that is absent from the modern, high-pitched room papered with one uniform pattern. The dado is divided three feet to four feet from the ceiling, and the coloring of the lower portion must always be heavier than that used on the upper, or a "top-heavy" look will be given to the room. When many pictures are to be hung up, the lower part of the dado should be of a whole color, either a whole colored paper, or a painted wall, as pictures are only shown off upon such a background. Where a whole tint is used for



THE DRAWING-ROOM IN ALMA-TADEMA'S HOUSE.

more one admires it. And as with one visit, so with one short article. It is not possible within our limits to give even an adequate notion of its beauty.

H. ZIMMERN.

THE relation between the forms and colors he adopts is always in the mind of the artist. If there be not much difference between the shades of color used, he sees that his forms shall be strong enough to take care of themselves; unless, indeed, it be his deliberate intention that the pattern shall just break the monotony of a flat surface, without itself being obvious. There are patterns that are meant to be felt by their influence rather than seen.

the lower part of the dado, the upper portion should be decorated with a frieze paper of a good, bold pattern, but of subdued coloring and of tint that harmonizes with the lower. Thus, the color used about the frieze should be the same as that on the lower part, but of a lighter shade, intermixed with some other colors that form a harmonious link between the two shades. Contrasts must be carefully avoided, but pale pinks, blues, and ambers can be blended together above a subdued gray-blue ground. The two portions of the dado should be joined together with a light wooden (black or brown) railing, or with a line of paint.

The dado decoration can be altered by placing the pattern paper upon the lower part and leaving the upper part plain colored, with or without a stencilled pattern upon it. This will suit a room where not many pictures are required, or that is already rather dark. Some part of the wall should always be in plain color, as the eye requires rest; and no pattern, however subdued in hue, can give the relief to the mind that a bit of plain coloring affords; and this scarcity of ornament in one part of the room is amply repaid by the effect it gives to such parts as are bright and should be bright. The true theory of effect is to use but one or two bright colors in a room, and to surround them by soft and subdued tints that throw up and do not destroy their brilliancy; a number of bright colors placed together destroy each other, and leave an impression on the mind of glare and vulgarity. Having settled upon your paper and ceiling, have the woodwork and cornice of the room painted either a shade lighter or darker than the walls, and shroud up the mantelpiece with curtains, of satin sheeting embroidered with crewels, and instead of the usual looking-glass over the fireplace, have a mirror surrounded with brackets holding china, or have a black wooden mantelpiece made with squares of looking-glass set in. The background of your room being thus completed in such a manner as really to be a background, your furniture will look twice as well as if it were stared out of countenance by the walls; and one need hardly add that all your friends will delight in a room that throws up and brings out their dresses and faces, instead of killing them by its glaring tints.

REFORM IN FRENCH DECORATION.

A REACTION is setting in at Paris against overcrowding and overdressing in interior decoration. For some time past the abuse of plush, silk, screens and objects of art and curiosity in the furnishing of Parisian apartments has been growing beyond all rea-

sonable measure. The window curtains have been tripled and the blinds have become flounced and fluffy à l'italienne, like ball-dresses. The ceilings and walls have been so crowded with hangings and mirrors and brackets laden with bronzes and porcelain that the rooms have come to resemble bazaars or museums. Then there have been Moorish bathrooms, Gothic arm-chairs, Pompadour toilettes, sedan chairs converted into cases for bibelots, beds surmounted by plumes of feathers, chimney-pieces draped

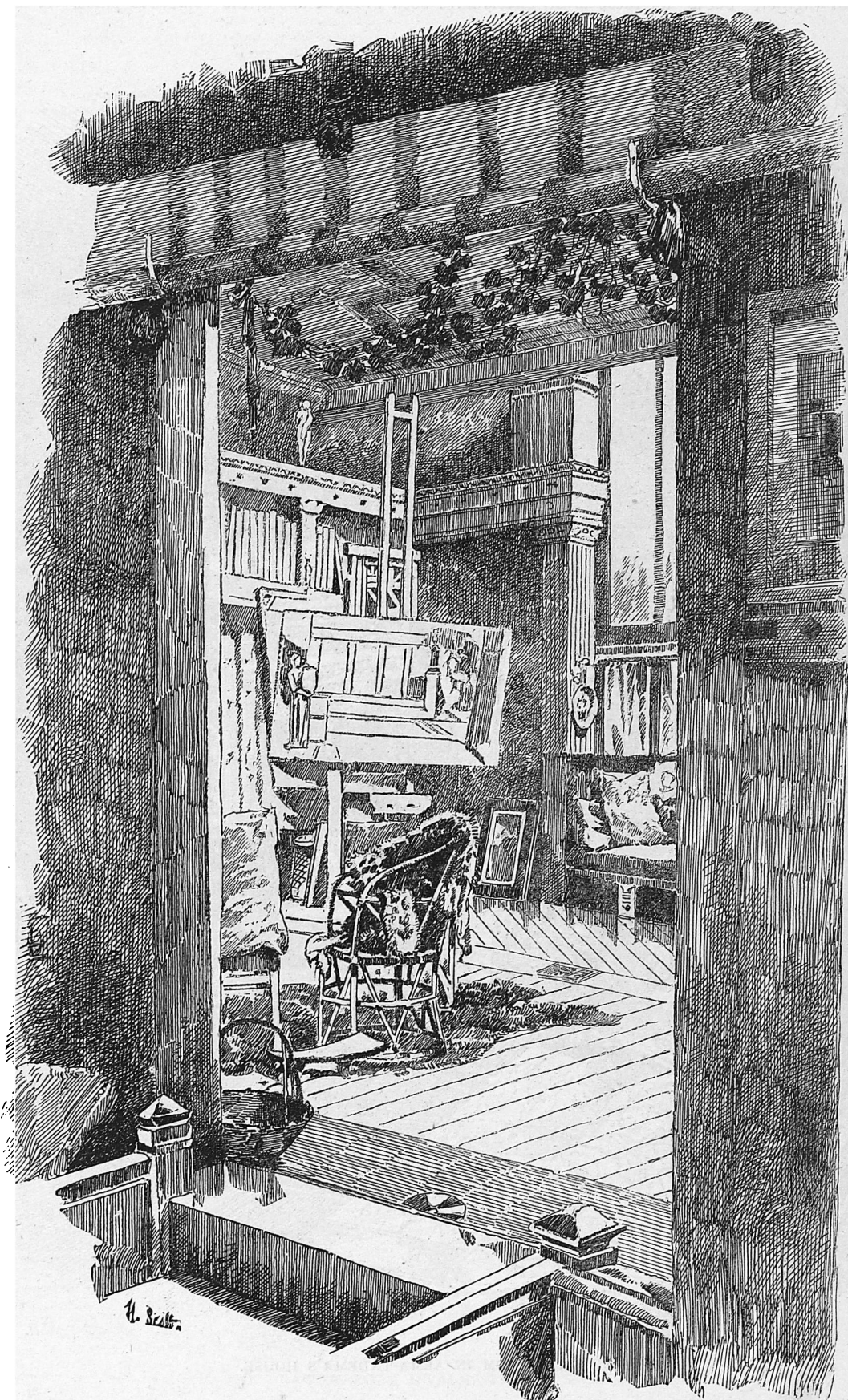
Louis XVI. style, with an admixture of the svelte and slender elegance of modern English furniture—the strictly necessary only, and that in a style of severe and distinguished elegance.

T. C.

FLORAL TABLE DECORATION.

THE piece of crimson velvet or plush down the centre of the table, which last year seemed to threaten to

become stereotyped and to displace all other methods of decoration at London fashionable dinners, has this year almost disappeared. Brocade is frequently used. The (London) Queen, from which we quote, says: "We have seen it at some small dinners, where it was desired that the outlay on flowers should be extremely moderate, and the effect was really excellent, the variegated colors of the brocade preventing the look of bareness which would have been inevitable with any plain material, and rendering a specimen glass before each guest ample for the floral decoration of the table. One specially pretty table of this description had the centre-piece of brown satin brocaded with yellow flowers, the edges were scalloped and finished with very narrow gold fringe. Before each guest was a specimen glass filled with buttercups and grass, and in the centre of the table was a fine old blue and white china bowl filled with the same flowers. All the china used was blue and white, and the glass engraved with the maidenhair pattern, with the exception of the hock glasses, which were of a pale shade of brownish yellow, and of the shape so familiar to us in old Flemish pictures. Another very pretty table, the decoration of which was far from costly, had a centre-piece of pale blue embossed velvet edged round with fern leaves, cornflowers, and white pinks, laid on as a wreath. Some pretty chased silver ornaments were placed upon it, and at each end was a silver cup filled with cornflowers, spiræa, and pink geranium. The silver candelabrum stood in the centre. The china was turquoise and gold, the glass quite plain except the champagne glasses, which were of a pretty shade of blue Venetian glass. The speci-



ALMA-TADEMA'S STUDIO.

men glasses were filled with the same flowers as the silver cups. Some people, who own valuable china or ivory figures, have this year begun to utilize them for dinner-table decoration. At one long table the centre-piece was of peacock-blue figured plush, edged with a thick but narrow chenille fringe. On this were placed single figures and groups of the most exquisite ivory carving, a large group forming the centre, and being surrounded by a circle of rose-red rhododendrons, so arranged that the trough which held them was invisible."